Yemen alleges presence of secret prisons in the south

Governor of Hadramout province vows accountability for STC-linked elements

MUKALLA: The Saudi-backed government of Yemen has accused the United Arab Emirates of running a secret prison at an airbase near the south Yemeni port city of Mukalla, fueling tensions in a deepening row between the two Gulf oil states.

The allegations were made by Salem Al-Khanbashi, the governor of the eastern Yemeni province of Hadramout, during a rare media trip arranged by the Saudi government, which flew international journalists from Riyadh to the Riyan airbase near the Yemeni city of Mukalla.

Al-Khanbashi told a televised press conference that necessary measures would be taken against the UAE and the head of Yemen's main separatist group, the Southern Transitional Council (STC), who the Saudi-led coalition in Yemen alleged had been spirited out of the country by his backers.

"All the measures will be taken to hold perpetrators of violations accountable, either Aidarous al-Zubaidi or the UAE - its elements, officials, or people working for them... to achieve justice for the victims and their families."

There was no immediate comment by the UAE foreign ministry.

The STC is fully committed to human rights and justice, an official of the group told *Reuters* in response to the accusation that the group had run a secret prison.

"We have continuously engaged constructively with UN and other human rights bodies to ensure the rights and protection of the Southern (Yemeni) people," he added.

Khanbashi's remarks are among the most severe accusations levied against the UAE in a war of words with Saudi Arabia.

The dispute broke into the open last year when STC fighters pushed Saudi-backed forces aligned with the internationally-recognised Yemeni government out of key provinces.

Then, in late December, Saudi Arabia struck what it said was an Emirati shipment of weapons and equipment destined for the STC in the port of Mukalla, before backing an offensive that saw the STC collapse and the UAE withdraw after nearly a decade as the main force on the ground in Yemen.

Disagreements between Riyadh and Abu Dhabi span the region, where they back opposing sides in conflicts from Sudan to Somalia and Syria. They are also engaged in fierce economic competition, including over who can attract more foreign capital and visitors and take the biggest share of the global AI boom.

Over the past weeks, Saudi and Emirati pundits have traded attacks on social media in an unusually open display of discord.—Reuters

What prompted US to abort Iran strikes?

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but the order didn't come."

A central factor for the stand-down was force posture. *Axios* reported that since the last clash with Iran in June, many US military assets had been redeployed to the Caribbean and East Asia.

"The theatre was not ready," one source said bluntly. Another added: "We sort of missed the window."

Limits of military leverage

The lack of readiness shaped not only strike options but also contingency planning for Iranian retaliation, which US officials warned could endanger American forces and allies across the region.

Regional leaders reinforced those concerns. In a call with Trump, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu warned that Israel was not prepared to defend itself against Iran's likely missile and drone retaliation.

He also believed the US plan "was not strong enough and wouldn't be effective", according to one of his advisers. Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman similarly expressed deep concern about regional destabilisation.

A diplomatic backchannel also provided an exit ramp. *Axios* reported that Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi sent messages to Trump's envoy, Steve Witkoff, committing to halt planned executions of detained protesters and "stop the killing".

Trump later acknowledged the messages had an impact, though a White House official insisted they were "not the only reason".

For now, US officials say military action remains "on the table." However, the near-miss suggests Washington's restraint reflected not just caution or diplomacy, but the hard limits of military leverage over Iran's internal struggle and the high costs of getting it wrong.

Even if strikes had been launched, analysts say they would have done little to protect protesters on the ground.

Andrew P. Miller said foreign military intervention is unlikely to create a stable democracy, especially one that benefits the intervening power.

Any action would probably have been restricted to "a single or brief set of strikes", avoiding ground troops yet risking Iranian retaliation and escalation, Miller added.

Sanam Vakil, of Chatham House, said Trump's approach relied more on coercive signalling than intervention. The deployment of the USS Abraham Lincoln carrier strike group, she said, was designed to pressure Iran's leadership rather than shield civilians.

"His references to wanting an agreement and to 'making Iran great again' are transactional signals aimed at the leadership rather than Iranian society," Vakil said. "The strategy is less about engineering internal change in Iran than about forcing its leadership to confront the limits of resistance."

Regime resilience

Vali Nasr, a prominent Iranian-American scholar in Washington, emphasised the durability of Iran's security apparatus. For protests to seriously threaten the regime, he said, parts of the state — especially the security forces — would need to defect.

"There is no sign of any defections … or that it has in any way fractured," Nasr said. "I am not certain the balance of forces necessarily lies with the protesters."

Sustained unrest over a longer period would be required to alter that balance, he added, highlighting the gap between public anger and the state's capacity to withstand it.

Scholars also note that the protests remain decentralised and leaderless. While symbolic support exists for former Crown Prince Reza Pahlavi or, less frequently, MEK leader Maryam Rajavi, most Iranians appear focused on internal change rather than exiled leadership.

Most experts agree there is little appetite inside Iran for either the restoration of the monarchy or the return of the MEK.



DIYARBAKIR (Turkiye): Protesters gather and flash victory signs during a demonstration against the attacks by the Syrian government forces on Monday. Despite heavy snow, protesters rallied in the main city in the Kurdish-majority southeast, where clashes erupted as police tried to stop them from marching.—AFP

Kurds feel disappointed, abandoned by US after Damascus deal

Erdogan hails Syria army for 'careful' offensive

QAMISHLI/ISTANBUL: Residents of the Kurdish Syrian city of Qamishli voiced disillusionment on Monday after a deal with Damascus struck a fatal blow to their long-held aspirations of autonomy, with some accusing the United States of abandoning them.

Under pressure from a government advance through Kurdish-controlled areas, Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) leader Mazloum Abdi said that he had agreed to a ceasefire deal formalising plans for Kurdish integration into the state in order to avoid "civil war".

The deal stipulates that the Kurds' de facto autonomous administration immediately hand over two predominantly Arab provinces it controlled, and outlines the integration of the body's civil institutions in its stronghold of Hasakeh. On Sunday, US envoy Tom Barrack embraced the new deal as an "inflection point, where former adversaries embrace partnership", but some in Qamishli saw it as a betrayal after the Kurds' contributions in the war against the militant Islamic State (IS) group.

"I never felt like the Americans' support was genuine," said 40-year-old Kurdish activist Hevi Ahmed, who likened Washington's "dealings with people to mere real estate brokerage". "The agreement is a disappointment after years of hope that the Syrian constitution might contain a better future for the Kurds," she added.

Spread across Turkiye, Syria, Iraq and Iran, the Kurds say that their attempts to establish an independent state have been systematically repressed by regional and international powers throughout their history.

Washington has long allied itself with the SDF, which helped lead the fight against IS. But since the fall of Assad in 2024, the US position has been more complex, with President Donald Trump broadly supporting the new government's efforts to unify the country while sending signals he is ready to move on from the SDF partnership.

Erdogan hails Syrian army

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan on Monday hailed the Syrian army for its "careful" offensive to take over Kurdish-held areas of the country's northeast despite what he called "provocations".

"The Syrian army's careful management of this sensitive operation ... is commendable. Despite provocations, the Syrian army has passed a successful test, avoiding actions that would put them in the wrong when they are in the right," he said.

Deadly clashes erupted about two weeks ago between Syrian government forces and the Kurdish-dominated SDF after the two sides failed to reach a year-end deadline to merge Kurdish fighters into the main Damascus military.

Days later, the army expelled the SDF from Aleppo then pushed rapidly eastwards sparking further clashes until Syrian President Ahmed al-Sharaa announced a ceasefire deal late Sunday that would see Kurdish fighters and Kurdish administrative bodies merged into the central state.

Turkiye has long been hostile to the US-backed SDF, seeing it as an extension of the Kurdish militant PKK and a major threat along the 900-kilometre (550-mile) border it shares with Syria.

"The principle of one state, one army is indispensable for stability," said Erdogan, describing the ceasefire and the integration agreement as "a very important achievement for lasting peace and stability in Syria".

He urged the deal to be implemented as soon as possible, saying there was "no excuse for stalling or playing for time. The era of terror in our region is over. No one should miscalculate."

Aras Mohammed, a 34-year-old employee in the Kurdish administration, also expressed a "great sense of disappointment". With the new deal, he said, Syrian President Ahmed al-Sharaa "imposes his vision of the state and constitution, based on the legitimacy he obtained by overthrowing al-Assad".

That vision involves a centralised government, which Sharaa argues is necessary for stability after years of war, but which flies in the face of calls from minority groups in Syria for a more federalised system that safeguards their goal of self-determination.

Mohammed said he also had major concerns after past "agreements have been violated, bypassed or diluted".—AFP

Italian designer Valentino dies at 93



VALENTINO Garavani

ROME: A mix of carmine and scarlet, with a hint of orange — a new hue, inspired by an elderly woman at Barcelona's opera house, whose elegance struck a young Valentino Garavani.

The colour, introduced to the fashion world several years later, in 1959, with a strapless cocktail dress of draped tulle, has carried his name — "Valentino red" — ever since, doubling as the eponymous Italian fashion group's signature.

"I think a woman dressed in red is always wonderful, she is the perfect image of a heroine," Valentino wrote in the book *Rosso* (Red), released in 2022. He would include at least one red dress in every one of his collections. Valentino, one of Italy's leading fashion designers, died on Monday at his Roman residence, his foundation announced. He was 93 years old. The cause of death was not immediately known.

Valentino ranked alongside Giorgio Armani and Karl Lagerfeld as the last of a leading generation of designers, from an era before fashion became a highly commercial industry run as much by financiers and marketing executives as by couturiers.

Scaling the heights of high fashion, he was the first Italian to feature on the exclusive Paris haute couture catwalks.

Passionate about film, he dreamed as a young man of dressing the "beautiful ladies of the silverscreen", as he called them, among them 1950s Hollywood stars Lana Turner and Judy Garland. Valentino would eventually design Elizabeth Taylor's wedding gown, and was the first choice for numerous Oscar winners, including Sharon Stone and Penelope Cruz.—Reuters

French TV broadcasts Louvre robbery images

PARIS: Footage of the spectacular robbery at the Louvre Museum has been broadcast for the first time on French television, showing the brazen jewel thieves breaking into display cases.

The images, filmed by surveillance cameras, were shown by the TF1 and public France Televisions channels on Sunday evening, three months after the hugely embarrassing break-in in October.

They show the two burglars, one wearing a black balaclava and a yellow high-visibility jacket, the other dressed in black with a motorcycle helmet, as they force their way into the Apollo Gallery.

After breaking in through a reinforced window with high-powered disk cutters, they begin slicing into display cases under the eyes of several staff members who do not intervene.

Managers at the Louvre have stressed that staff are not trained to confront thieves and are asked to prioritise the evacuation of visitors. The security failures highlighted by the break-in on a Sunday morning in broad daylight have cast a harsh spotlight on management of the institution and director Laurence des Cars.

Trade unions are pressing for more recruitment and better maintenance of the vast former royal palace, launching several days of strikes in recent months. Another stoppage on Monday forced a full closure for the third time since December, leaving thousands of tourists disappointed outside again. Four suspects are in police custody over the October 19 heist, including the two suspected thieves, but the eight stolen items of French crown jewels worth an estimated $102 million have not been found.—AFP

Grid issues behind costly power

Continued from Page 1

in the south-central corridor and aggravated bidirectional power flows in the network.

The regulator called for fast-tracking the completion of critical transmission projects, upgrading existing substations with higher-capacity transformers and reactive power support, and enhancing real-time grid monitoring to address persistent overloading in the transmission network.

It said the resulting financial burden could not be calculated under current conditions because assessing the severity and duration of overloading would require hourly digitised operational data to determine how long a transformer or circuit operated beyond its rated capacity.

The regulator warned that transmission system constraints significantly impact the overall efficiency, reliability and affordability of electricity supply. When the transmission network lacks adequate capacity or flexibility, it restricts the flow of power from generation sources to demand centres.

"This leads to congestion, increased transmission losses and underutilisation of low-cost or renewable generation, ultimately raising the overall cost of electricity," Nepra said.

"Transmission constraints not only raise reliability concerns for consumers but also lead to higher electricity tariffs. This is primarily because, in the absence of adequate transmission capacity, the system must rely on more expensive and less efficient power generation sources, even when cheaper alternatives are available but inaccessible," it explained.

It said that one of the key challenges in the country's power sector was the persistent inadequacy of the transmission system, particularly in evacuating electricity from cost-effective and indigenous generation resources located in the southern part of the country.

It noted that the system was often forced to rely on more expensive power plants in the northern region, which significantly increased the overall cost of electricity supply.

Despite the critical importance of resolving these issues, many transmission bottlenecks have remained unaddressed for years. The NGC has consistently failed to resolve them in a timely and efficient manner.

Observations show that nearly every second project undertaken by the NGC suffers from time delays and cost overruns. These delays not only inflate capital costs but also result in operational inefficiencies, such as the forced dispatch of power plants in violation of the EMO, leading to substantial financial losses for the power system.

The south-to-north transmission corridor remains a major bottleneck in NGC's network, limiting the transfer of cost-effective electricity primarily from coal, nuclear and gas plants in the south to key demand centres in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

As a result, the system continues to rely on more expensive residual fuel oil (RFO) and re-gasified liquefied natural gas (RLNG) generation in the north, pushing up generation costs and tariffs.

The regulator cited the example of the overloaded 500kV Jamshoro and Matiari grid stations and their associated lines, which it said restrict power flow to about 1,800MW against available system capacity of 4,500MW. This bottleneck causes frequent load curtailment of up to 1,750MW of cheaper power. Evacuation of more than 2,000MW from Karachi's two nuclear power plants was another example.

As a related event, the 4,000MW high-voltage direct current (HVDC) Matiari-Lahore transmission line, commissioned in September 2021 over 878km, still remains underutilised due to delays in completing the 500kV Lahore North substation and related transmission lines.

"This inefficiency imposes a financial burden on end-users despite the line's full operational readiness," the regulator said, adding that average loading of the line in FY2024-25 was recorded as 1,401.40MW with utilisation factor at just 35.04pc. There are many other such examples of smaller scale, Nepra noted.

The regulator also highlighted weaknesses in grid monitoring infrastructure. It said the original Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition (SCADA) system, the telecom backbone operational since 1992, had become obsolete due to the lack of hardware and software upgrades, impairing functionality.

Dawlance Inaugurates Advanced Condenser Manufacturing Facility, Strengthening Pakistan's Industrial Self-Reliance


WELCOME DAWLANCE MANAGEMENT
WHITE EAGLE ENGINEERING PVT LTD.
Strategic Manufacturing Partner to Dawlance / Arçelik A.Ş
Appliance Parts Manufacturer in Pakistan
Proud member of Dawlance Group of Companies
Dawlance
arçelik

Karachi, January 20th, 2026: Dawlance, Pakistan's leading home appliance manufacturer and a subsidiary of the global Beko Group, has inaugurated a greenfield condenser manufacturing facility developed in partnership with White Eagle Engineering Pvt. Ltd., a subsidiary of Optimize Engineering Core Pvt. Ltd. The initiative marks a major milestone in Dawlance's localization strategy and represents a significant advancement in Pakistan's refrigeration component manufacturing capabilities. Developed through a collaborative partnership with White Eagle Engineering and international technical partner Tatato, the facility addresses a critical gap in Pakistan's appliance manufacturing ecosystem by enabling the domestic production of condensers, highly technical and quality-sensitive components that have historically been fully imported. The inauguration was attended by **Mr. Umar Ahsan Khan, Chief Executive Officer, Dawlance,** along with senior members of the company's engineering, technical, and development teams. The delegation conducted a comprehensive technical review of manufacturing operations, quality control systems, and production standards, which have been established to meet international benchmarks through close collaboration between Dawlance Pakistan, Beko Türkiye, and White Eagle Engineering. The achievement follows several months of intensive joint development between Dawlance and Beko Türkiye's Engineering and R&D teams and White Eagle Engineering's technical specialists. The locally manufactured condensers have been designed, tested, and validated by Pakistani engineers, achieving quality, performance, and finish standards that exceed imported alternatives. Only a few years ago, this component was widely considered too complex to manufacture locally, an assumption this project has decisively challenged. Speaking at the inauguration, **Mr. Umar Ahsan Khan, CEO, Dawlance,** said: "At Dawlance, localization is not only a strategic priority but a long-term commitment to strengthening Pakistan's industrial capability. The inauguration of White Eagle Engineering reflects the progress that can be achieved when local engineering expertise is developed in line with international quality standards. By supporting the local manufacturing of critical components such as evaporators and condensers, we are helping build a more resilient supply chain, reducing import dependence, and enabling sustainable growth for the appliance industry in Pakistan." Currently, approximately 75 percent of the component's value is locally produced, with further localization planned in subsequent phases to reduce import dependency even further. The initiative delivers strategic localization of a critical refrigeration component, improved quality and reliability, foreign exchange savings, knowledge transfer, workforce skill development, and expansion of Pakistan's industrial manufacturing base, while also creating future export potential as capabilities scale. This partnership reflects Dawlance's commitment to "Progress Today, Preserve Tomorrow", advancing modern manufacturing capability, strengthening local industry, and supporting sustainable industrialization by shifting value creation closer to the point of consumption, thereby contributing to reduced Scope 3 emissions. The successful inauguration reinforces confidence in Made in Pakistan refrigeration components and demonstrates the country's ability to build globally competitive industrial capability.

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